The Devil You Know

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The Devil You Know

by SingingInTheRaiin

Summary

6 Months after Will died and came back to life (for the second time!) he's slowly adjusting to his life with Hannibal Lecter in a starring role. It's strange to have the devil so intent on courting him, but Will's not going to let that stop him from enjoying his life.

Notes

Welp, looks like I finally gave in and wrote a sequel. I honestly didn't think I was gonna do that haha

Will was woken up from an embarrassingly good dream by the sound of several of his dogs barking loudly. They weren't usually the type to wake him up for no good reason, so he decided that it was worth at least investigating what was going on. He got up, and even though the dogs sounded like something urgent was going on, he took the time to quickly change into a clean pair of boxers and pull on some pants.

Then he grabbed his gun and headed downstairs to the front door, where he could hear a light knocking. He surged forward and quickly swung open the door. The dogs all rushed outside to circle around Will's late night visitor, and his shoulders slumped down as he saw who it was. He reached up to run a hand through his hair while letting out a yawn before dropping his gun down onto the small table next to the door. "What the hell are you doing here?"

Hannibal smiled, and nodded towards the interior of the house. "May I come in?"

Will sighed, but stepped aside, and let the devil walk through his front door. It's not like he could really stop Hannibal even if he wanted to, and he'd rather at least know where the man was than to leave it as a surprise. He dragged his feet in the direction of the kitchen, since that was generally Hannibal's first stop whenever he visited. The dogs came in a moment later, still looking up at Hannibal. "You really need to stop feeding them every time you come over. They're starting to associate you with nothing but treats."

"That is a perfectly satisfactory association as far as I am concerned." Then Hannibal put his cooler down on the counter to open it up and pull out some raw meat, which he dropped down into the center of Will's pack. Once they finished snapping up the morsel, they strolled out of the kitchen, presumably back to where they'd all cuddle up together to sleep. Then Hannibal pulled a few more things out of the cooler before turning to look at Will. "You were right about that officer."

Will sighed, and even though he already knew the answer, he felt like he had to ask anyways. "What did you do to him?"

Hannibal arched one eyebrow. "If you're really so curious, then you're more than welcome to accompany me next time." Will quickly shook his head and turned down the offer, just like he always did. Hannibal shrugged, as though he wasn't bothered at all. "Well, he will not be bothering his family any longer. Though he wasn't exactly in the prime of his life, so unfortunately, there was less to salvage than I would like. I was thinking that you might enjoy going back to your roots with a hearty Cajun stew."

"I'm pretty sure we've talked about this before. I'm not going to eat human meat. It's bad enough that you feed it to my dogs, but at least they don't understand what a cultural taboo you're forcing them to commit."

Hannibal shrugged again. "It was worth at least offering." He opened the container he'd brought the stew in so that the deliciously spiced aroma would waft out and fill the kitchen. When Will still didn't budge on his stance, Hannibal reached into one of the cabinets to pull out a bowl. "Please, allow me to make you something so that I won't be dining alone."

At first, Will hadn't even accepted Hannibal's offers to cook completely vegetarian meals for him. But they'd reached a compromise, where Will would keep his kitchen stocked with what he was willing to eat, and then he would watch very closely as Hannibal whipped up whatever quick meal was on his mind so that Will could be sure there was no meat- human or otherwise- in what he was served.

They finished eating just as Will's eyes starting drooping shut. He glanced at his watch to see that it was around midnight, and he wondered if Hannibal even needed to sleep. And he wondered why the man felt it was appropriate to bother him so late. Maybe it was his fault for never discouraging these visits. But what was he supposed to do? He didn't think he could just turn down the devil himself and not have to face any consequences.

Usually now would be around the time that Hannibal would offer to clean up so that Will could head back to bed, and Will would tell Hannibal to just leave since he didn't want the man rummaging around in his house while he was asleep. But instead of continuing with their normal routine- and god, how weird was it to think that any of this could be a part of a normal routine?- Hannibal leaned back in his seat, and looked across the table at Will with his gleaming eyes. "Do you recall the reason Uncle Jack was nearly suspended from his job over two years ago?"

Will tilted his head to think, even though he already knew the answer. "You know I don't like you calling him that," he muttered before actually answering the question. "One of his trainees went missing while searching for- for you." He then turned his full attention on Hannibal. How had he not even thought to ask about things like this sooner? Their current situation had been going on for almost half a year now. He could use the excuse that he wouldn't be able to do anything with the information anyways so there was no point in learning it, but that was bullshit. It was more honest to say that he'd let himself grow too comfortable with these circumstances. "What did happen to her? And why are you bringing this up now?"

"Her name is Miriam Lass. And lately I've been doing some serious consideration about giving her back to Jack. It would provide such a lovely distraction from whatever is currently bothering him."

Will's eyes widened slightly. "She's still alive? Why would you-" he cut himself off before finishing the question. There was never any point to asking Hannibal why he did anything. The answer was almost always just because he could. That was part of what made him so difficult to catch. He had no clear motivation, or need, or anything along those lines. He gulped once, and took a moment to think before he blurted out a million other 'why' questions. Why return her now? Why keep her alive? Why? Why? Why? "If you're telling me this to ask my opinion on the matter, then I think that you should definitely return her. If she's still alive, then you can't kill her anyways. No innocent people, that was our deal."

Hannibal hummed thoughtfully for a moment. "You aren't worried that she will recognize me and get me arrested? If that were to happen, you would quickly be brought down with me. Choosing my victims for me does make you an accomplice."

Will ground his teeth together in frustration. "I don't care if I get sent to jail if it means you go too," he finally got out. "I would rather know that Miriam Lass is safe and back home."

That look of curiosity in Hannibal's eyes was one that Will really hated. "With our current arrangement, if I were to be sent to jail, it would save no innocent lives. In fact, it would prevent those who have managed to slip the system from being punished for what they've done. Do you not wish to make the world a better place by getting rid of those criminals?"

Of course he was going to make it about ethics. As if he had literally any right to talk about ethics at all. "It isn't our right to take the law into our own hands. I only made the deal because I thought that if you were going to be killing people either way, you may as well not be killing those who don't deserve it. But if there's a possibility of you going to jail and being stopped from killing at all, I would be quite satisfied. It would mean that I didn't have to tell anyone about you, which means that I wouldn't be breaking my end of our deal, either."

"You are such a treasure," Hannibal said with no small measure of delight in his voice. It was always impossible to figure out what he would find amusing versus what he would find to just be rude. Will just blinked, and then let out a soft yawn before he could stop it. Hannibal stood abruptly, wearing a strange look on his face. "I will leave you to get your sleep. It was truly informative to get your opinion on this matter." He grabbed his cooler off of the counter, and hurried away faster than Will had ever seen him go before.

He stared after the psychiatrist with wide eyes, trying to figure out what the hell had just happened. Had he done something to offend Hannibal? He didn't think so, because usually Hannibal would just tell him. And Will was finding it rather difficult to offend the older man lately, no matter how much effort he put into doing so.

After coming to the conclusion that he was far too tired to be thinking about any of this without his brain exploding, he shook his head, and then headed back upstairs to his room. He could clean up all of the mess in the morning. In the real morning, when human beings were supposed to be awake, and not in this fake morning where it was still pitch dark outside, and he was supposed to be asleep. And he was so tired that he fell asleep almost as soon as his head hit the pillow, glad for the fact that coming back to life came with the side benefit of not being plagued by ridiculously sweaty and frightening dreams. Though a quick glance at his discarded sleep clothes was a reminder that he was still having ridiculously sweaty dreams that could be considered frightening in their own way.

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It was a bit of a surprise when Will got to keep sleeping until he was ready to wake up. And then the peace of the nice morning was almost immediately broken by the shrill ringing of his phone. He'd asked Beverly to change the ringtone for him at some point, but she'd picked some weird song that he'd never heard of before, and he'd immediately changed it back to its generic tone.

He answered the phone, feeling pleasant despite the early hour. "Will, I think we've got a Ripper scene here."

Will sighed, though he wasn't nearly as exasperated as he let on. "I already told you that that's the one case I can't work anymore." He wasn't willing to lie about any information he might find at a scene, but he wasn't sure how much information would be considered too much, and would have Hannibal claiming that Will had broken their deal. Though he was a

little surprised that Hannibal would leave the officer out as a artsy tableau. Usually he tried to be a little bit more subtle these days, because he didn't want enough of a connection between the victims to be made for the police to mark him as having a motive.

Jack sighed too, and he just sounded so tired. "It's not exactly a normal Ripper scene. Not that any of them are really normal, but even for him, this is a little bit out there. We don't have an entire body. But we've got reason to believe it's him." He hesitated for a moment before continuing. "I know you haven't been keeping up on the case, and I've obeyed your wishes by not calling you out even when something rather unusual happened. An incarcerated man in a mental hospital for criminals claimed to be the Ripper. Alana Bloom talked to him, and said she's pretty sure that he is not. I got a phone call in my house, Will. I may have gotten a little overzealous, and I asked for help from Lounds. You can look up the article on her website if you're interested. The point is, I need your help. I know I said I wouldn't ask you to look, but I really need you right now, Will." All the words came out in a jumble, and Will would definitely ask someone else later to recount everything in a more calm and orderly fashion, since he was sure he was missing out on important details at the moment.

Will took in a deep breath, then slowly let it out. It would be just wrong for him to deny the man his help when he sounded so desperate. Will wasn't sure he could remember the last time he'd heard Jack sound like that. And he didn't want to be the cause of anymore stress to the already large amount Jack had to deal with. "Fine. Where are you?"

"Observatory." He quickly rattled off the address before hanging up. Will was used to that by now, so he just dropped his phone onto his bed, let out a small groan, and then went to take a shower and get dressed. Once he was presentable, he headed out to the observatory. As he drove, he wondered what Jack had meant when he said they didn't have an entire body this time. They usually didn't have a complete corpse, thanks to the fact that Hannibal took organs to eat from each body, so that's not what they meant. Then what? If Hannibal didn't leave the normal bits behind, then where had he put them?

He finally got to the observatory, and saw several police cars, but no one was actually outside. They must've all headed in already, and were too busy investigating whatever partial body they found. He sighed, and purposely leaned forward to bang his head lightly against the top of his steering wheel a few times. If this was really Hannibal's work, how much could Will share before it would be considered breaking their deal? And what if- No, there was no point in worrying about all of that.

He got out of his car and headed into the observatory, bracing himself for whatever manner of oddness or gore that he might find. He was surprised to see simply two arms on the ground, and not even any blood around them. The left had a cellphone, and the right was clutching a bouquet of red roses.

Will cleared his throat, and Jack spun around, though he relaxed when he saw that it was just Will. "As you can see, it's not a whole body."

"Why are you so sure it's the Ripper?"

Jack scowled, though he looked more angry with himself than anything. “Because I provoked him. I shouldn’t have, but I did, and now this,” he gestured to the arms. “Please tell me you can read anything from this scene. I need to find this son of a bitch.”

Will went through the motions, and then said a bunch of bs that didn’t actually tell anyone anything that they hadn’t already known. He thought that Hannibal would be proud of his ability to evade, and then he cringed at the thought of Hannibal being proud of him for any reason. Then his eyes zeroed in on the bunch of flowers, and it took a great deal of restraint to not just start screaming like a maniac. Hannibal had been so careful since their second deal, but apparently he’d decided that it was time for another love letter.

And then some other information sank in. Hannibal had been talking about Miriam Lass just last night, and the arms were still cold enough to not have been sitting around for a while, and Jack mentioned again about the phone call he got, but said it was from Miriam Lass. Those were Miriam Lass’ arms on the ground.

He clenched his hands into fists, and then stomped out of the observatory and back to his car where he could call Hannibal in private. The bastard answered almost immediately. “Will, I wasn’t expecting a call from you today. What can I do for you?”

“Did you kill Miriam Lass?” He always preferred getting straight to the point when talking to Hannibal. He knew that if he didn’t, they’d end up talking metaphors around each other for hours.

And Hannibal had the gall to sound amused by Will’s question. “Is there any particular reason you would ask me such a thing?”

Will scoffed, and he couldn’t keep the anger out of his voice as he spoke. “Come on, don’t play dumb. Do you really think that the severed arm holding flowers is subtle? We had a deal, and you-!”

“I’ve done nothing to go against our deal,” Hannibal interrupted in the same calm voice as always. “I swore to you that I would never kill another person that you consider innocent. One does not need their arms to continue living.”

Okay, so technically he had a point there. But that didn’t make Will feel any better. If Hannibal was willing to make loophole type exceptions like this once, then what was there to stop him from doing it again? He should’ve known that there would be nothing simple about making a deal with the devil. “I thought when you said you were going to give Miriam back, you meant all of her. And what the hell is up with the flowers?”

He could practically here the smugness in Hannibal’s voice. “I thought that you might like them. You deserve to be surrounded by things as beautiful as you are.”

Will couldn’t help feeling like he was about to choke on his own spit. Of course, Hannibal had mentioned- too many times to even count- that he wanted Will to be his consort. But he’d never really considered what that would actually mean. And while Hannibal had left that love letter for him before, there hadn’t been any other signs of blatant flirtation since then. What

the hell was he supposed to make of that? “I don’t want you to give me flowers in a severed hand! That’s not romantic or sweet or thoughtful, it’s just gross and creepy!”

“I understand.” Then there was a long pause, and Will let out a sigh of relief at the thought that at least he’d gotten Hannibal to understand. But that relief was quickly shattered when Hannibal continued speaking. “You’d prefer more direct gifts instead of receiving them through proxies. I will take your preference into consideration.”

Would anyone look at him strangely if he just started screaming right now? He didn’t think he could really be blamed if he did do that. Then again, that would probably require him to explain the situation, which would be an immediate deal breaker that would get him sent to- what exactly was the after life called? “What do you call the after life? The place with the stream and my dad’s truck and everything.” He hadn’t meant to ask, the words just slipped out. That had been happening to him more and more lately. Maybe dying (twice!) just wasn’t great for one’s sanity.

It seemed proper to feel victorious at the way he’d clearly tripped Hannibal up for a moment, but then the other man regained his senses and was able to answer the question. “It isn’t heaven, hell, or purgatory the way that they are depicted in Christian mythology. There is no judgement, or sorting people out based on whether they were ‘good’ or ‘bad’. It is rather complicated to explain to a human, no matter how extraordinary you are. Perhaps it would be easier to talk about in person?”

Will sighed, and ran a hand through his hair. He peered through the windshield of his car to see several other officers finally exiting the observatory. “You’re a very strange person,” he said quietly.

Hannibal hummed under his breath, but didn’t respond to that. “So can I expect you for dinner today?”

Will shivered at the thoughts his imagination replied about the many ways he could be dinner himself. Thankfully, he was able to refrain from saying anything embarrassing out loud. “Fine. But don’t start cooking until I get there, unless you want to watch me eat a microwave dinner.”

The sharp inhale was enough of an answer as to whether Hannibal would obey Will in this instance or not. “Very well. I look forward to seeing you at seven. I always enjoy having you in my home.”

“Sure,” Will muttered before rudely hanging up. There was only so much of Hannibal that Will could handle in a day, and if he was going to be having an entire meal with him, then he definitely wouldn’t survive an entire conversation on the phone with him on top of that.

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As Will pulled into Hannibal’s driveway, he had to wonder if he was making some kind of huge mistake. First of all, he was already twenty minutes late. But that hadn’t been by accident so much as it had been him basically dragging his feet out the door after he’d gone home to feed and play with his dogs. Hannibal had killed people before for lesser crimes than

being late. But he wouldn't kill Will, would he? That felt like it would be such an anti-climatic end to this strange game that they were playing. And it would definitely give Will full rights to tell Hannibal to shove off if they had to see each other in the after life.

A few more minutes passed, and Will heaved out an overly dramatic sigh before getting out of his car and walking up to Hannibal's front door. He raised his arm, but before he could even begin knocking, the door swung open, revealing Hannibal in an apron. He looked eager enough, at least to Will, who had gotten pretty damn good at reading the usually impossible man. "Will, please come in. I'm so glad you could make it, despite whatever held you up." He held out his arm, so Will shrugged off his jacket and handed it over for Hannibal to hang up.

He shrugged as he followed Hannibal to the kitchen. "I was debating whether or not I wanted to come," he admitted honestly. "Hope you didn't start without me."

When they got to the kitchen, he could see several ingredients lining the counter, along with a handful of bowls and silverware that all still looked clean. "I would hate to see you turn down good food simply because you didn't see me prepare it for you." He halted just as Will slid up onto one of the island stools. "I almost forgot. I will be back in a moment." Then he hurried off, and Will rolled his eyes before leaning forward and resting his head on his folded arms.

Hannibal returned a minute later with a bundle of multi-colored roses, with some other lacy looking flower strewn in between the roses. "These are for you."

He got the feeling that arguing about accepting the flowers would take a lot longer than just accepting them, and throwing them away as soon as he got home. He'd throw them away right now, but even though he was pretty sure that Hannibal wouldn't kill him, he didn't exactly want to test it out. Dying was a pretty painful affair, and he knew that if he pushed Hannibal far enough to make the man break his own deal, it probably wouldn't be a quick and easy death on the books for him.

Will took the flowers, and put them down in front of him on the island. He considered just conveniently forgetting them here, but then that would only give Hannibal an excuse to come and visit him. Not that he needed any excuses to do just that. "Thanks," he grunted.

Apparently that was good enough for Hannibal, because he was positively glowing. "I'm so glad you like them. Next time I promise to come up with something more original than flowers, but they really do suit your beauty."

It was one thing to hear cheesy compliments over the phone, but face to face felt a lot more intense, and Will could feel his face heating up. "Whatever. Are you going to cook or not? I'm starving."

"I am always pleased to provide food for you, darling boy."

Will frowned, but figured he had to choose his battles. As he watched Hannibal gracefully move around the kitchen, almost like it was some kind of fancy dance, he absent mindedly

reached up to rub at the pale scar on the front of his neck. For some reason, he'd found himself doing that a lot lately without even thinking about it.

And then finally, after Will's stomach had growled loudly and embarrassingly for what felt like the thousandth time, Hannibal announced that their food was done, and they headed into the dining room, where two plates were already set. Will was tempted to take the seat at the end of the table, but he didn't want Hannibal 'subtly' glaring at him the entire meal, so he just sighed and sank down in the seat next to the head.

He didn't even bother asking Hannibal what the meal was. All he cared about was that he hadn't seen Hannibal using meat of any sort. With that off his mind, he had no problem digging into the food ravenously, like it was the last meal he was ever going to get to eat. For a moment, Hannibal seemed vaguely disgusted by Will chowing down so quickly, but then Will let out a soft moan at how good the food tasted, and that seemed to appease the psychiatrist.

When they finish, they retire to the study, where Hannibal pours them both a glass of whiskey, and they sit down near each other. "Have you always been like this?" Will can't help wondering. "Not like the murdering and cannibalistic part, but how you're clearly not human. Has that always been the case?"

Hannibal nodded once. "What I am is not something that can be created out of a pre-existing mould. For as long as human beings have live and died, I have watched over the whole process. Why the sudden curiosity?"

Will shrugged, and took a small sip of his drink. "Just trying to figure it all out, I guess. I mean someday I'm going to be dead and back there again."

"And yet our deal only involved you becoming my consort upon the condition that you break our deal in any way. You wouldn't be required to ever see me again. The fact that you're asking, as if planning for the future, leads me to believe that you do think you'll be seeing me again, even after your death."

Will wanted to claim that the redness on his face came from the alcohol, but he'd always been pretty good at holding his drinks, and knew that Hannibal knew that too. "You're the one who said you'd stalk me everyday until I agreed," he grumbled. "No need to act all smug about it like you didn't threaten to make me your consort 'whether I wish it or not'."

Hannibal put his glass down on one of the coasters on the small coffee table, and then scooted slightly closer to Will. "Do you understand why I am so eager to have you by my side for all of eternity?" When Will shook his head with uncertainty, Hannibal smiled. "Because you are the most marvelous creature I have ever come across. Your mind is clever enough to keep up with mine, you have a good heart and care about all manner of people, and all of your goodness is encased in a very lovely body." He reached up and gently pressed his hand against Will's cheek.

Before things could get further or stranger, Will jumped up, and then put his glass down as well. "Stop messing around with me," he ground out. "I wish you'd just leave me alone for eternity."

Hannibal stood as well, and despite the fact that they were the same height, he seemed to tower over Will. “Is that really what you wish for?”

“Yes,” Will breathed out.

Hannibal stepped even closer, so that they were less than an inch away from each other. “Then it is too bad that I don’t intend to ever let you go.”

Will blinked a few times, and slowly backed away. He knew enough about animals to know that you should never run from a predator if you don’t want it to chase you. And there wasn’t a single doubt in his mind that Hannibal Lecter was a predator in all meanings of the word. “I have to go. I have to help Jack deal with the mess you made.”

Hannibal tilted his head, but didn’t try to follow after Will. “Do you still wish for Miriam Lass to be returned?”

“In one piece,” Will reminded the psychiatrist, feeling slightly thrown off by the sudden change in topic.

Hannibal just grinned. “I will do as you ask. But it will cost you.”

Immediately, Will’s mind rushed to think of all the terrible things that Hannibal could ask of him. “I’m not going to give you a kiss,” he warned, even though he knew that if that was actually the price, he’d gladly pay it to save Miriam Lass’ life.

Hannibal let out a hearty laugh. It was much louder and more genuine sounding than his usual polite chuckles. “I would never dare ask for such a gift, but I am delighted that you even thought of such a thing. I wouldn’t want to take away any value from when we do finally kiss for the first time. No, all I was going to ask for was a promise.” He must’ve been able to see the way that Will instantly stiffened, wary of whatever kind of promise might be asked for him. “Nothing binding or at the same level as our deal. I simply want you to promise that you will give me a chance to prove to you in this life why I am worthy of your companionship. And I want you to promise that if you enjoy our time together, you will not deny it.”

Will’s shoulders slumped down. That didn’t seem too bad. He was already sort of giving Hannibal a chance now anyways, wasn’t he? What else could explain all the late night meals, and conversations, and the fact that he was actually assisting a murderer? He sighed, but nodded once. “Sure, I promise to give you a chance. But don’t go crazy. I don’t want you ‘wooing’ me, or whatever the hell else you think you should do.”

“God forbid we become friendly with each other,” Hannibal said in a throwback to the first time Hannibal had cooked for him. That felt like it had been years ago. So much had happened since then.

Will wanted to repeat the same thing he’d said back then, about not finding Hannibal that interesting, but that would be a lie now. It had felt true when he’d first said it, but how could he not be completely fascinated by the devil, or whatever Hannibal was? Of course the fact that he took such a personal interest in Will was unsettling, but he couldn’t deny to himself

that he did rather enjoy some of the conversations that they've had together. "I think it's a little too late to consider us friends. You have already murdered me. That's not a very friendly thing to do."

Hannibal laughed again. "You're right. And it's quite rude of me that I've yet to even apologize for such appalling behavior. I wasn't prepared for you, Will. I never feel quite prepared. You keep me on my toes, always guessing what you're going to do next. And I'm only right about half the time."

"So then you're admitting that you can be wrong?" Will couldn't help asking.

Hannibal nodded once. "Everyone is wrong occasionally, Will." Then he cleared his throat, and his face became serious again. "Since you have given me your promise, I will give you Miriam Lass. I do hope you appreciate the lengths I will go to to make you happy."

Will sighed. "Let's hope I never find out just how far you mean. Thank you for the meal; it was delicious as always. And thank you for Miriam. I really should be heading out now, but I'll see you around."

As he turned to go, he could quite clearly hear Hannibal say, "You most certainly will."

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